**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**
**EQIP – RINCON-MESILLA Valley Irrigated Cropland**
**FISCAL YEAR 2002**

## INTRODUCTION:

This environment assessment (EA) is being prepared by the United States Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to comply with the requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and implementing regulations at 40 CFR Parts 1500-1508. The EA will assist NRCS in determining whether the proposed action will have a significant impact on the quality of the human environment and therefore requires preparation of an Environmental Impact Statement.

## NEED FOR PROPOSED ACTION:

**Purpose of and Need for Action**: There is a need in the Rincon-Mesilla Valley Irrigated Cropland Geographic Priority Area (GPA) to improve irrigation water use efficiency on farm, reduce leaching of nutrients and pesticides into the groundwater, and decrease the mortality of young plants. The purpose of meeting these needs is to stretch the existing water supply for agricultural sustainability and future uses, maintain a safe water aquifer for drinking water and promote better Integrated Pest Management in the valley.

### Background:

The GPA area runs through the southern part of the Rio Grande Valley from the Dam at Caballo Lake north of Hatch, New Mexico, all the way south (some 62 miles) to the Texas State line and the Mexican border. Fluctuating water supply from the Rio Grande River is the main source of water that feeds Elephant Butte and Caballo Dam. From these Dams, the Elephant Butte Irrigation District delivers the majority of its water through a series of open ditch canals to the Rincon and Mesilla Valley's. These two Valleys' consist of 92,600 acres of mainly flood irrigated agricultural farmland. Then a complex system of open channel drains returns groundwater and runoff back to the Rio Grande River. Depth to groundwater in this area is usually less than 100 feet, and in parts of the Valley depth to water table is as shallow as 7 feet. Making the aquifer highly vulnerable to contamination according to the report by New Mexico Department of Health – Border Health Office "An Assessment of Public Water Supply Systems in Dona Ana and Luna Counties."

The Rincon and Mesilla Valleys' are nearly level to very gently sloping and vary in corridor width. From less than one mile to as much as five miles wide. Most parcels are leveled and semi-level broad basin of rivers and alluvial fill sediments. Soil textures range from clay, clay loam, loam, loamy fine sand, to loamy very fine sand.

Growing season is about 200 to 220 days, making it ideal for double cropping vegetables. The principle crops however are cotton, chile, silage corn, alfalfa, vegetables, winter wheat, and pecan trees. Most fields have been in production for decades and have been deep plowed to a minimum depth of twenty-four inches for years.

Irrigation is primary surface irrigation with unlined ditches. Some new concrete lined ditches have been install but most have cracked ditches with undersized concrete or corrugated metal pipe (CMP) ports, or no pipes at all.

Elevation of the valley is approximately 3700 ft. above sea level. The climate is arid with precipitation ranging from 7 to 10 inches annually, mainly falling in the mid to late summer. Average daily temperature range from 44°F to 76°F.

**ALTERNATIVES**:

Alternative 1. No Action

Alternative 2. Proposed Action: Use NRCS Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) authorities to assist farmers in the Rincon-Mesilla Valley Irrigated Cropland Geographic Priority Area (GPA). The following farm conservation systems may be applies singly or in any combination that include:

Sprinkler Systems, Filtered Drip Systems, Surface and Subsurface systems, Concrete Lining Ditches with and without CMP Pipe, Irrigation Pipeline, Leveling Land, Land Smoothing, to optimize irrigation. The use of Structures for Water Control – examples - Metal Check Gates, Ports, High Velocity Turnouts, Diversion Boxes, Trapezoidal Flumes. Irrigation Water Management (IWM) techniques, Conservation Crop Rotation, Residue Management (Seasonal), Nutrient Management, Pesticide Management.

Alternative 3. This alternative employs the same actions and practices as Alternative 2 except that it treats more acres and saves additional water. Use NRCS -Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) is authorized to assist farmers of the Rincon-Mesilla Valley Irrigated Cropland GPA (Geographic Priority Area), apply farm conservation systems. This system includes ditch lining with concrete or installation of irrigation pipeline, field borders, leveling land to optimize irrigation. Use of irrigation water management (IWM) techniques along with nutrient and pesticide management will also aid to optimize irrigation. Brush Management is also a practice considered under this alternative.

**ALTERNATIVE CONSIDERED BUT NOT STUDIED IN DETAIL**

One alternative was to use NRCS –EQIP authorities to assist farmers apply brush management of salt cedar along the Rio Grande. While there may be some shallow ground water saved by brush removal, it is negated by the nearby drainage ditches, which carry excess water to the river. Salt Cedar competes with native trees in the riparian zone along the river. Brush Management in this case will be referred to either the Wildlife Habitat Incentive Program (WHIP) or Wetland Enhancement Program (EWP).

Another alternatives was to use Cross Wind Trap Strips, Field Borders or Windbreak, in and adjacent to crop field were considered. This would reduce soil blowing, conserve moisture, protect crops and increase the natural beauty of an area. These practices may be applied to the GPA in the following

years as a method to control air pollution or particulate in the air, but further study and cost share is needed, so these practices will not be considered further in this document.

**SCOPING OF ISSUES FOR UNIQUE AND PROTECTED RESOURCES IN THE AREA**:

*Threatened and Endangered Species and Species of Concern*: A record search by County shows the southwestern willow flycatcher as a species listed as endangered under the ESA. It lives along the channelization of the Rio Grande River and floodways. Suitability of habitat for the willow flycatcher will be determined prior to any practices being applies to these areas. If habitat is suitable, bird surveys will be conducted. Any survey showing presence of flycatchers will trigger consultations with Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), until a final recovery plan is issued, consultations with FWS will guide NRCS actions. For example, brush management involving salt cedar in the Rio Grande floodplain will not be undertaken before consultation with the USFWS to determine potential habitat and impacts to the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. However, the US Fish & Wildlife Service will be consulted before any practices are installed. No potential habitat for other T & E species, which may be present in the Rio Grande River, will be disturbed as a result of this federal action.

The black-tailed Prairie Dog is a consideration for Threatened and Endangered Species that may be found in fallowed land fields within the GPA area. NRCS would encourage landowners to leave bands or colonies alone or avoid these areas if possible.

The County's list of Threatened and Endangered Species list several other species, but NRCS has determined that none of these will be affected by any alternatives or actions considered in this EA.

*Cultural Resources and Historic Properties*: NRCS completed a search of cultural resource records and the density of such sited was high in this GPA. In some areas of New Mexico, acequias, or irrigation dirt ditches, can be hundreds of years old. However, NRCS found no recorded ditches more than 50 years old in this GPA. Nonetheless, to ensure that unidentified historic properties including archeological sites are not adversely affected, sites specific field surveys will be done and consultation will be conducted with the New Mexico State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) before NRCS implements any ground disturbing activities.

*Wetlands:* Section 404 permits will be obtained for any practice that comes under the jurisdiction of the Clean Water Act (33 USC 1344) and Federal Regulations 33 CFR 323.4) and the wetland provisions of the 1985 Food Security Act as amended.

**IMPACTS AND EFFECTS OF ALTERNATIVES:**

Alternative 1. No Action

A significant amount of conservation treatment is applied in concert with measures applied under the EQIP program in the Rincon-Mesilla Valley Cropland GPA. The amount of conservation treatment applied in this GPA will be substantially reduced. It is impossible to determine to what degree this reduction will be. If no action is taken irrigation efficiencies will remain between 35 and 45% and the probability of groundwater degradation due to fertilizer and/or pesticide application will not be

decreased. No action will lead to more controversy and larger water shortages in years to come resulting in environmental and socio-economic impacts in the near future.

Alternative 2 Proposed Action

There are over 92,000.0 acres of farmland in the area with potential to benefit from the application of conservation systems that include construction practices in combination with management practice. NRCS expect to treat only about 5 percent of this acreage with funds by EQIP under this alternative because of the limited amount of EQIP funds available. The estimate of the extent, to which each of the practices below would be implemented within the R-MVIC-GPA and the cumulative effect on water quality and quantity, is shown below.

A) *Concrete Lined Ditch and Appurtenances* – a fixed lining of impervious material installed in an existing or newly constructed irrigation field ditch, irrigation canal, or lateral. Concrete Lined Ditch requires the construction of a graded ditch pad, which will be constructed according to the planned slope of the ditch, and to the proper height and top width, which will allow the contractor to construct the ditch according to NRCS specifications. The Fill material needed to construct the ditch will either be taken from an adjacent field which is being leveled or another borrow area in the vicinity of the planned ditch. If the fill material is obtained off farm, the landowner will obtain the proper permits and permissions necessary to complete the job.

**Short term effects**: If the source of the fill material for the ditch comes from a leveling operation, the leveled area may become temporarily susceptible to wind erosion. This could apply to any borrow area to obtain fill material. No short- term effects on water quality and quantity are expected. Placement of the fill material may create dust because of the dirt moving process itself. Plants and animals are not expected to be impacted by the installation of this practice. The noise and dust generated by equipment during installation may disturb some individuals in the vicinity.

**Long term effects**: Facilitates ability of irrigator to apply irrigation water in a more efficient and uniform manner. Improved crop production. Reduce the probability of degrading shallow groundwater from nutrient or pesticide intrusion or contamination.

B) *Structures for Water Control* – A structure in an irrigation, drainage, or other water management systems that conveys water, control's the direction or rate of flow, or maintains a desired water surface elevation. Minor structures for water control such as ditch turnouts with metal pull gates, ditch check gates, drop structures and canal gates may be planned and constructed in existing or new ditches. Installation of minor structures will involve a minimal amount of disturbance to the adjacent soil. Most of the work will be in a respective existing ditch or underground irrigation pipeline.

**Short term effects:** Effects may include dust and noise generated by the equipment used during the installation period. It is not expected that any increase in soil erosion rates will occur or that any impairment to water quality or quantity will take place as a result of the installation.

**Long term effects:** Facilitates ability of irrigator to apply irrigation water in a more efficient and uniform manner. Improved crop production. Reduce the probability of degrading shallow groundwater from nutrient or pesticide intrusion or contamination.

C) *Land Leveling* – Reshaping the surface of the land to be irrigated to planned grades. A design will be provided which indicates where the cuts and fill areas are located in the respective field, which is to be leveled. The soil will then be loosened by either disking, ripping or plowing or by a combination there of and then scraped or hauled from the high areas to the low areas. The average earth moved during construction ranges from 100 to 400 cubic yards per acre.

**Short term effects:** The land leveling process pulverizes the soil making it temporarily susceptible to wind erosion until water can be applied. Slopes are designed to a grade, which minimizes runoff. No short- term water quality and quantity problems are expected to occur during the installation process. The noise and dust generated by equipment during installation may disturb some individuals in the vicinity. Temporary effects, which may occur, include a reduction of fertility in the cut areas, dispersal of salts to other areas of the field, and soil compaction if the field is wet or damp when leveled.

**Long term effects:** Improve crop production. Facilitates ability of irrigator to apply irrigation water in a more efficient and uniform manner. Reduce the probability of degrading shallow water table or surface water from nutrient or pesticide intrusion or contamination.

D) *Irrigation Pipelines and Appurtenances*: - A pipeline and appurtenances installed in an irrigation system. All pipelines installed will be plastic (PVC) pipe. Installation of an irrigation pipeline requires that at trench be excavated at a depth deep enough to allow the placement of 30 inches of cover over the top of the pipe. The depth of the trench may vary depending on the planned diameter. It may be necessary to install cement thrust blocks underneath the soil surface if considerations indicate they are needed.

**Short term effects:** Effects may include dust and noise generated by the equipment used during the installation period. It is not expected that any increase in soil erosion rates will occur or that any impairment to water quality or quantity will take place as a result of installation. Plants and animals will not be impacted by the installation of this practice.

**Long term effects**: Facilitates ability of irrigator to apply irrigation water in a more efficient and uniform manner. Improved crop production. Reduced probability of degrading shallow water table or surface water from nutrient or pesticide intrusion or contamination

E) *Irrigation Water Management* – Determining and controlling the rate, amount, and timing of irrigation water in a planned and efficient manner. An irrigation system must be in place in order to apply this practice. This practice could require the installation of one or more of the structural practices listed under items A, B, C, or D.

**Short term effects:** Practices installed to implement IWM are listed under items A, B, C, or D.

**Long term effects:** IWM include increased irrigation efficiencies and subsequent water savings. The amount of water saved varies according to the crop being grown and the type of irrigation system being used. In general it is expected that approximately on and a half acre-foot per acre of water will be saved annually where this practice is implemented. This will reduce pressure on pumping the ground water table. Mortality of young plants due to salt accumulation will be reduced. Reduced turbidity and sediment yields are also expected effects of IWM.

F) *Nutrient Management* – Managing the amount, form, placement, and timing of applications of plant nutrients. Nutrient application recommendations will be based on soil tests or recommendations provided by New Mexico State University. Nutrients will be applied in liquid or granular form. Granular fertilizers are generally broadcast using a pull type wheel driven broadcast sprayer or a power take off pull type broadcast sprayer. Both types are calibrated prior to use. Nitrogen is generally applied in 2 to 3 split applications. Liquid fertilizers are generally formulations of nitrogen that are applied in split applications through irrigation water.

**Short term effects:** May include costs for soil testing and training requirements for producers to properly apply this practice.

**Long term effects:** Can include increased plant productivity, which in turn can increase plant cover on permanent pastures. Additionally decreased runoff, sedimentation and turbidity may occur, as well as, decreased contamination of our ground water and drinking water supply.

G) *Pest Management* – Managing agricultural pest infestations (including weeds, insects, and diseases) to reduce adverse effects on plant growth, crop production, and environmental resources. The planned integrated pest management system will include appropriate cultural, biological and chemical controls singly or in any combination to control the target pest(s) like powdery mildew in chile, cutworm in corn, and bolweevel in cotton to name a few. When chemical pesticides are used, the label will be strictly adhered to.

**Short-term effects:** Could include chemical drift depending on the type of equipment used.

**Long term effects: C**an include increased plant productivity, which in turn could increase plant cover. Decreased runoff, sedimentation and turbidity may occur.

H) *Irrigation System Surface and Subsurface* – A planned irrigation system in which all necessary water control structures have been installed for the efficient distribution of irrigation water by surface means, such as furrows, borders, contour levees, or contour ditches, or by subsurface means. Structural practices listed under items A through E may be required in order to implement this practice.

**Short term effects:** Practices installed to implement this practice are detailed under items A through E.

**Long term effects:** This practice includes decreased irrigation induced erosion, increased irrigation efficiencies, decreased runoff and a resultant decrease in sedimentation and turbidity.

I) *Conservation Crop Rotation* – Growing crops in a recurring sequence or rotation on the same field. This practice does not require the application of and structural or land disturbing practices. Successful implementation of this practice may be dependent upon the application of several other practices including E, F, or G. High residue soil improving crops will be grown in rotation with soil depleting crops in order to maintain or improve soil organic matter content. The number of years of continuous soil improving or depleting crops will depend on the respective soil type.

**Short term effects:** No short- term effects have been identified

**Long term effects:** Soil tilth improved. Increase soil organic matter content and soil fertility. Improved health and vigor of respective crops. Improved crop production. Increased economic returns to producer.

J) *Residue Management (Seasonal)* – Managing the amount, orientation, and distribution of crop and other plant residues on the soil surface during part of the year, while growing crops in a clean tilled seedbed. Residues will be left on the surface until it is time to prepare the soil surface for the next year's crop. Residue will be incorporated into the soil by either plowing or disking or a combination thereof.

**Short term effects:** Normal tillage may create dust simply because of the tillage operations itself. The noise generated during the tillage operations may disturb some individuals.

**Long term effects:** Soil tilth improved. Increase soil organic matter content and soil fertility.

K) *Irrigation System - Trickle Surface & Subsurface* – A planned irrigation system in which all necessary facilities are installed for efficiently applying water directly to the root zone of plants by means of applicators (orifices, emitters, porous tubing, perforated pipe) operated under low pressure. The applicators can be placed on or below the surface of the ground. This applies to all components of the onfarm system except for special structures, such as surface water inlets, pumping plants, and components covered by other standard. Permanently installed mains and laterals shall be designed and installed according to D above.

**Short term effects:** Include dust and noise generated by the equipment used during the installation period. It is not expected that any increase in soil erosion rates will occur or that any impairment to water quality or quantity will take place as a result of the installation.

**Long term effects:** This practice includes decreased irrigation induced erosion, increased irrigation efficiencies, decreased runoff and a resultant decrease in sedimentation and turbidity.

L) *Irrigation System – Sprinkler* – A planned irrigation system in which all necessary facilities are installed for efficiently applying water by means of perforated pipe or nozzles operated under pressure. The sprinkler irrigation system purpose is to efficiently and uniformly apply irrigation water and maintain adequate soil moisture for optimum plant growth by means of sprinkler or spray nozzles. Sprinkler irrigation plans shall be based on an evaluation of the site and the expected operating conditions. The design criteria for the sprinkler irrigation system shall be based on depth of application, capacity, application rate, and distribution pattern and spacing.

**Short term effects:** include applying irrigation water without causing excessive water loss, erosion, or reduce water quality. Reduce the effects on downstream flows or aquifers that affect other water uses.
**Long term effects:** controlling the salinity of soils and water thus reduce plant mortality. Reduce the effects of nutrients and pesticides on the surface and ground water quality. Reduce the rate of water and sediment runoff for agriculture sustainability.

Alternative 3 Increase in treatment area

This Alternative 3 is almost the same as Alternative 2 but adds other practices like Cross Wind Trap Strips, Field Borders, Windbreaks, Filter Strips, Brush Management, and No-Till Residue Management which would greatly add to the overall cost and funds are limited.

| **Table 1** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Comparison of Alternatives** | | | |
| Effects on Needs | | | |
| **Alternatives** | Irrigation Efficiency (80 acres) (%) | Water Supply (acre-feet saved) | Installation Costs $ |
| **1. No Action** | < 50% | 30 | $ 73,613.00 |
| **2. Alternative 2** | > 75 % | 200 | $165,003.00 |
| **3. Alternative 3** | > 75 % | 200 | $165,003.00 |

| **TABLE 2, ALTERNATIVE 2** | **CUMULATIVE ACTIONS** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **Treatment by Landowner initiative & SWCD alone.** | | **Treatment with Landowner, SWCD, others and NRCS EQIP Assistance Cumulatively** | | |
| **Conservation Treatment** | | Total Cost | | Total Cost | GPA Cost Share |
| Irrigation Pipeline | 500 Feet | $ 3,840.00 | 2,500 Feet | $11,520.00 | $ 6,912.00 |
| Concrete Ditch Lining | 1,200 Feet | $19,800.00 | 2,600 Feet | $11,375.00 | $ 5,687.50 |
| Land Leveling | 20 Acres | $ 6,000.00 | 40 Acres | $ 6,000.00 | $ 3,900.00 |
| Structure for Water Control | 0 Each | -0- | 30 Each | $ 3,300.00 | $ 1,650.00 |
| Struct. for Water Control (mcg) | 3 Each | $ 1,050.00 | 10 Each | $ 1,200.00 | $ 600.00 |
| Water Flow Meter | 0 Each | -0- | 1 Each | $ 1,100.00 | $ 660.00 |
| Irrigation Water Management | 10 Acres | $ 640.00 | 40 Acres | $ 300.00 | $ 150.00 |
| Irrigation System - Sprinkler &/or Drip | 0 Each | -0- | 1 Each | $ 8,000.00 | $ 4,000.00 |
| Irrigation System - Surface & Subsurface | 1 Each | -0- | 8 Each | $23,000.00 | $ 6,900.00 |
| Nutrient Management | 0 Acres | -0- | 120 Acres | $ 360.00 | $ 270.00 |
| Pest Management | 0 Acres | -0- | 100 Acres | $ 200.00 | $ 150.00 |
| Upland Wildlife Habitat Mgmt. | 640 Acres | -0- | 25,000 Acre | -0- | -0- |
| | | **$31,330.00** | | **$66,355.00** | **$30,879.50** |

| TABLE 3 | ALTERNATIVE 1 | ALTERNATIVE 2 | ALTERNATIVE 3 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Conservation Treatment | Treatment by Land-owner initiative & SWCD alone | Treatment with Landowner, SWCD, others and NRCS EQIP Assistance (Cumulatively) | Same as Alternative 2, with increase in treatments |
| Irrigation Pipeline | 500 Feet | 2500 Feet | Cumulatively will result in project having approx. 20 % more feet and acres than Alternative 2 |
| Concrete Ditch Lining | 1200 Feet | 5280 Feet | |
| Land Leveling | 20 Acres | 120 Acres | |
| Measuring Irrig. Water Flow Meter | 0 Each | 4 Ea. | |
| Structure for Water Control | 10 Each | 50 Ea. | |
| Irrigation Water Management | 10 Acres | 120 Acres | |
| Irrigation System -Surface & Subsurface | 1 Each | 8 Ea. | |
| Nutrient Management | 0 Acres | 120 Acres | |
| Pest Management | 0 Acres | 120 Acres | |
| Upland Wildlife Habitat Management | 0 Acres | 25,000 Acres | |

**REFERENCES:**


State of New Mexico 303(d) List for Assessed Stream and River Reaches

US Fish and Wildlife Service, Endangered Species County Lists.
*http://ifw2es.fws.gov/endangeredspecies/lists/ListSpecies.cfm*

US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office *Technical Guide, Section V, Conservation Effects.*

US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Field Office *Technical Guide, Section IV, Standards and Specifications.*

US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service National *Range and Pasture Handbook*

US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service *Agronomy Technical Note 28. Water Erosion-Universal Soil Loss Equation. April 1984.*

US Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service Agronomy *Technical Note 27. ECS-Revision of the WEQ Modified "I" Values Table. October 1995.*


PERSONS AND AGENGIES CONSULTED:

Local work group meetings - minutes and list of persons invited and attendees list is available for review in the Las Cruces Field Office.

Finding of No Significant Impact
For the Implementation of EQIP
In the
RINCON-MESILLA Valley
Irrigated Cropland GPA

**INTRODUCTION:**

The RINCON-MESILLA Valley Irrigated Cropland GPA is a federally assisted action under the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), with assistance from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). An environmental assessment was undertaken in connection with the development of this proposed action. This assessment was conducted in consultation with Local, State and Federal agencies. Data developed during the assessment are available, upon request from:

United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Las Cruces Field Office
2507 N. Telshor Drive, # 1
Las Cruces, New Mexico 88011

The Environmental Assessment (EA) is attached for reference.

DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

Table 1. Determination of Significance of Proposed Action

| CONTEXT | INTENSITY | REASONS FOR NON-SIGNIFICANCE |
|---|---|---|
| **Water saved** - 3% of total water used by agriculture (200 Ac. Ft.) will be saved annually. | Permanent water savings each annually | Water saved will only be noticeable in dry years. Allocation is beyond control of NRCS |
| **Ground Water Quality** – Five percent reduction in nitrates. | Nitrates contamination is minimized over life of practice per treated area. | Project action does not reduce nitrates below EPA standard for drinking water. |
| **Public Health and Safety (Air Quality)** – Less than 5% of agricultural area will be disturbed. | Temporary dust during construction scattered over time and location. | Rural Characteristic of the area precludes air quality problems at any one place or any one time. |
| **Cumulative impacts** - 4% of agricultural area will be affected. | Increased irrigation efficiency and nutrient reductions on treated acres will continue for life of practices and management is permanent. | Action by all other sources is only 2% more than NRCS alone. |
| **Surface Water Quality** - No detectable change in surface water quality will occur. | Surface water contamination is minimized over the life of the practices. | Project action does not reduce water quality below EPA standard. |

Other considerations related to context and intensity is discussed as follows: Farms are similar in the Rincon-Mesilla Valley GPA and are not unique compared to other irrigated farms in the state. No issues or concerns have been expressed at any meetings, so no significant controversy is expected. Irrigated land to be treated with EQIP represent less than 0.15% of the total area in the GPA, as a result of this, no significant impacts to unique area is expected. All proposed actions from the proposed alternatives are known from past experience in the area, thus uncertainty and risk are insignificant. Precedent for future action is dependent upon reauthorization of funding when the time limit of the Rincon-Mesilla Valley GPA expires. Future actions will be very limited because nearly all farmers interested in this proposal are going to participate in the first round. Although there are sites listed on National Register of Historic Places or cultural resources within the GPA boundaries, no practices will be installed that will affect them and all practices installed with EQIP assistance that are considered undertakings will undergo a records check and Section 1065 Consultation with SHPO. There are no anticipated effects on endangered species or their critical habitat. No national, state, local, or tribal laws will be violated by this action.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**.

This finding is based on the evidence presented in the environmental assessment of impacts and alternatives for this geographical priority area. Based on the assessment and the reasons given above, I find that the alternatives analyzed in the EA will have no significant impact on the quality of the human environment. Therefore, an environmental impact statement will not be prepared.

**ROSENDO TREVINO**
State Conservationist

*February 8, 2002*
Date